

MALAK

Written by

Mohamed Youssouf

Draft 5

Copyright: Mohamed Youssouf

Contact: mowriter@hotmail.com

EXT. DOWNTOWN - PEDESTRIAN CROSSING - DAY

We're at a busy downtown intersection on a warm summer day where residents and tourists merge. A melting pot of nationalities wait for the pedestrian crossing light to turn green.

Five year old CAITLIN is swinging her teddy bear with her left hand and holding her 35 year old mother ELIZABETH BRAHIM's hand with the other. The bear slips from Caitlin's hand and she somehow manages to momentarily break away from her mom. She STEPS onto the road as her mom turns and shouts:

ELIZABETH
CAITLIN, NO!

In a flash and out of nowhere, 36 year old athletic looking MALAK runs onto the street and, anticipating the approaching car, WRAPS himself over Caitlin.

BANG.

CARS SCREECH.

Malak and Caitlin get HIT HARD and are FLUNG twenty meters ahead.

PANDEMONIUM.

Cars REAR-END each other.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(Running to Caitlin)
CAITLIN, CAITLIN, oh my God!

OMAR BRAHIM, her 30 year old husband and Caitlin's dad, urges the crowd in his French/Moroccan accent:

OMAR
(Running)
Someone call 911. PLEASE. CALL AN
AMBULANCE.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - HOSPITAL - EVENING

Malak lays unconscious in bed. Elizabeth is standing at the corner of the bed. Her white dress is SMEARED with BLOOD.

Malak opens his eyes. He WHEEZES.

MALAK
(Softly)
Ahh.

He sees Elizabeth. He speaks with an African accent.

MALAK (CONT'D)
The girl. What happened?

Elizabeth approaches and holds his hand.

ELIZABETH
Caitlin.

Omar enters.

OMAR
(To Elizabeth)
You're here!?

ELIZABETH
(To Omar)
He woke up.

Omar holds Elizabeth.

MALAK
She is...your daughter.

OMAR
Yes. How did you see it?

MALAK
I saw the bear. It must belong to a child, I thought. I went to retrieve it and she just stepped in front of me. I tried to...

He stops. They all know the ending.

Elizabeth is in tears.

OMAR
(To Elizabeth)
Come on. Let's go. Let him rest.
(To Malak)
We'll come back to see you tomorrow.

MALAK
How is she?

OMAR
(Crying)
They tried to...she didn't make it.

MALAK
I'm so sorry.

Omar nods in appreciation.

OMAR
The doctors said it was a miracle
you survived.

They leave Malak.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - HOSPITAL - DAY

Malak is asleep. Elizabeth is sitting in a chair beside the bed.

She's not staring at Malak, rather examining him.

Omar slowly opens the door and waves his wife over.

INT. ICU RECEPTION - HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

OMAR
We have to finish this paperwork.

For some strange reason, Elizabeth is trying to put on a brave face.

ELIZABETH
Sure.

OMAR
(Pleading)
Please cry. Get angry. Something.
It's OK.

ELIZABETH
I know.

A nurse gives them paperwork to sign.

ICU NURSE
(Softly)
So I'll need your signatures here
and here.

OMAR
When can we bury our daughter?

ICU NURSE
I'll file these right away and
it'll all be sorted tonight.

OMAR
Thank you.

ICU NURSE
I just need your credit ca...

The nurse feels embarrassed.

ELIZABETH
I'll get my purse.

ICU NURSE
No, no, you know what? We can do
that later. I'm very sorry for your
loss.

OMAR
Thank you.

The nurse leaves ashamed.

ELIZABETH
We need to go to church. We need to
get a casket, arrange things, let
people know.

OMAR
I know. I'll take care of it.

He holds her hand.

OMAR (CONT'D)
Just tell me what you want done.

ELIZABETH
We need to get the cupcakes she
likes. What were they? You know the
cupcakes? Those little pink ones?
Where was that? Where did we....we
have to get those cupcakes. She
loved those cupcakes.

OMAR
Pink velvet.

ELIZABETH
Pink velvet. That's it.
(BEAT)
I'm going to check on Malak.

OMAR
OK, baby.

ELIZABETH
Don't forget: church, casket,
Facebook, pink velvet.

OMAR

OK, Liz.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Malak is awake and a nurse is checking his vitals.

Elizabeth enters.

RECOVERY NURSE

All done.

MALAK

(to Nurse)

Thank you.

The nurse recognizes Elizabeth.

RECOVERY NURSE

Sorry for your loss.

Elizabeth nods and gives her an insincere smile.

The nurse leaves.

MALAK

(To Elizabeth)

Oh, hello.

ELIZABETH

Hi. I didn't introduce myself. I'm Elizabeth. You met Omar, my husband, yesterday.

MALAK

Yes I remember. Omar is African, yes? Algerian?

ELIZABETH

Moroccan.

MALAK

Right.

ELIZABETH

You're not from here either.

MALAK

The accent?

ELIZABETH

I googled you.

MALAK
(Astonished)
Why would you do that?

BEAT.

ELIZABETH
I don't know.

MALAK
I'm from Djibouti in East Africa. I
was just coming back from a job
interview yesterday.

Elizabeth pulls a chair and takes a seat.

ELIZABETH
Really? How did it go?

MALAK
I didn't get it.

ELIZABETH
That's unfortunate. What do you do?

MALAK
I'm a social worker. I developed an
app that helps people plan for
their future. An American company
saw me on the BBC and invited me
over for an interview to spearhead
their CSR department.

ELIZABETH
Wow! That's really impressive.

MALAK
Thank you. I simply developed an
app. I consider myself too selfish
to have the courage for more.

ELIZABETH
I don't.
My husband Omar is a tech
entrepreneur.

MALAK
Oh.

Silence.

They look at each other.

He doesn't know what to say or what to do. His eyes wander around the room for a moment. He looks back at her.

A polite nod.

She responds with half a smile.

He breaks the silence.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Ehm, what do you do?

ELIZABETH

It's not important. I want you to come to the wake. Will you come?

MALAK

Ehhh..

ELIZABETH

Please. It's important to me.
Please.

MALAK

I don't want to intrude. I don't
thi...

ELIZABETH

(Interrupts)

Please.

MALAK

I am grateful for your gesture. But
I am leaving; going back home.

ELIZABETH

When?

MALAK

Ehm, I have to book a flight. I'm
here on a visitor's visa so I can't
stay for long.

ELIZABETH

It's tomorrow.

He realizes there's no escape.

MALAK

OK.

ELIZABETH

You promise?

MALAK

Yes of course.

ELIZABETH

I'll leave you the address. You know what? I'll send you a car. Give me your address.

Malak gives her the address and has an ominous look on his face as he rubs his right index finger with his thumb.

INT/EXT. CAR/DRIVEWAY- BRAHIM RESIDENCE - DAY

We hear SUFI music playing as CHARLIE, the family chauffeur drives Malak up to Omar and Elizabeth's mansion. Charlie is 60 but looks younger.

MALAK

Wow!

(To Charlie)

Omar is in the tech business, correct?

CHARLIE

A different world from the small church ceremony, I know. Yes, Mr.Brahim is very good at what he does. Generous too. He gives us all shares in the businesses he starts. Isn't that something?

MALAK

Really? That's very generous.

(BEAT)

Why would you tell me this?

CHARLIE

I feel you're going to be part of the family. Mrs.Brahim told me what you did.

MALAK

Oh!

CHARLIE

They consider everyone working for them part of their family. We feel the same way. My children are going to college because of them.

MALAK

That's great. Really great. I don't work for them.

CHARLIE

I understand.
Mr.Brahim says when God blesses
you, it means God wants your help
to do His work.

MALAK

Is that right? That's a good way of
looking at it. But I don't think
I'm going to be working for him.
Mr.Brahim, that is.

Charlie smiles.

They reach the house.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The live Sufi music is louder in this room that is decorated
with Moroccan motifs and furniture. A MAJLIS lines the walls.

Pictures of a happy Caitlin hang like lanterns.

All the mourners - men, women, black, white, Arab and Asian -
are dressed in traditional Moroccan attire.

The WHIRLING begins.

Malak enters and is stuck. He's not sure where to go or what
to do. Elizabeth sees him and waves him over to sit with her
and others. He obliges.

The dancing is accompanied by chanting and clapping. Malak
tries to follow. He sees Omar in the middle of the whirling.
He tries to follow the movement of those seated; the clapping
and the general vibe.

We watch this spiritual mourning until we,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRAHIM MANSION - BACKYARD - DAY - LATER

People walking around the sprawling manicured backyard.

Omar joins Malak and Elizabeth.

MALAK

(To Omar)

That was absolutely beautiful.

OMAR

She loved to dress up and dance.
She even learned a few songs, right
sweetheart?

ELIZABETH

She did.

Elizabeth takes comfort in Omar's embrace.

MALAK

Thank you very much for inviting
me. I am truly honored.

OMAR

Thank you for coming. Elizabeth
told me you're leaving soon?

MALAK

That is correct.

OMAR

Did you like your visit?

MALAK

Very much. I love it here.

ELIZABETH

Let me fix you a plate.

MALAK

Thank you.

Omar watches his wife walk away.

OMAR

Ever been to Morocco, Malak?

MALAK

No but I really want to travel all
over Africa. It's a dream of mine.

OMAR

That sounds like fun.

MALAK

It depends where one goes but yes
it should be. It's good to see you
held on to your roots.

OMAR

I love our culture. It's so rich
and pure yet conflicted.

MALAK

Africa!

OMAR

(Scoffs)

Africa!

JIM, a middle-aged man, approaches. Jim looks like the nicest man on earth. Just by looking at him, you can tell he's a kind, pure, good human being.

JIM

(To Omar)

Beautiful ceremony.

OMAR

She would have loved the dance, right?

JIM

Oh yeah, she would have jumped in.

OMAR

Ha.

(To Malak)

I'm sorry, this is Jim, Caitlin's music teacher. And our good friend. Jim, this is Malak.

JIM

OH! Yes of course. It is a pleasure to meet you.

(then)

I teach music on the side. Passion of mine since childhood.

They shake hands.

MALAK

It's a pleasure, Jim. You were close?

OMAR

Thick as thieves.

MALAK

Really? What did she play?

JIM

Piano. And very well, I might add. Right, Omar?

Omar nods but his mood is changing. Malak notices.

MALAK

Ehh, have you been to Morocco, Jim?

JIM

Oh many times. With the family.
Before I met Omar, all I knew about
Morocco was Rick's Cafe.

MALAK

Casablanca! That's a good movie,
eh?

JIM

One of the best.
(To Omar)
Pity Samira couldn't make it. She
really wanted to. But she's too
sick and Meghan is looking after
her.

OMAR

I know. It's OK.
(To Malak)
Samira is...was Caitlin's best
friend in school.

MALAK

Oh.

Elizabeth comes back with a plate full of food for Malak.

ELIZABETH

Here you go.

Omar looks at her.

JIM

Lucky you. I'm on a diet.

ELIZABETH

(To Jim)
I'll fix you a plate.

Before Jim could answer, Elizabeth is off again.

Jim and Omar exchange a worried look.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Malak is packing when he hears a KNOCK at the door. He opens
it and is surprised it's,

MALAK
Elizabeth! Hello. What are
you...please come in.

ELIZABETH
How have you been?

She enters.

MALAK
Good, thank you. Excuse the mess,
I'm packing.

ELIZABETH
Sure.

She looks around.

MALAK
Can I get you something to drink?

ELIZABETH
I'm good, thanks.

He quickly picks up the neatly folded clothes off a chair.

MALAK
Please.

She sits.

ELIZABETH
Thank you.
(Respectful)
Malak, Omar and I would like to
invite you to stay with us so we
can help you find work here.

Malak pauses. His mouth is open but the words seem to have
escaped him.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Before you say anything, it's not
charity. We don't feel bad for you,
we just want to help.

MALAK
That's very generous but I can't.

ELIZABETH
We have to do something for you.
You have to let us.

MALAK

Look, I underst...

ELIZABETH

Try it. Just try it. You can stay for a week, two, a month, two, whatever you're comfortable with.

MALAK

I leave tomorrow.

ELIZABETH

Don't leave.

Malak is overwhelmed. He's involuntarily rubbing his index finger again.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Charlie is in the family car talking on the phone.

CHARLIE

Yes sir. Not yet.
(Looking at the room)
About 10 minutes or so.
Yes sir. I will let her know.

We hear a BARK and see a beautiful Labrador Retriever in the back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She's coming out now, sir.
Yes, he's with her.
Will do.

He hangs up.

Malak walks Elizabeth to the car.

Charlie gets out and opens the door for Elizabeth. The dog runs out towards her.

ELIZABETH

Hey boy!

MALAK

Who's *this* guy?

ELIZABETH

This is Ludwig.

MALAK

Hi Ludwig. He's a beauty.

CHARLIE
 (To Malak)
 Hello sir.

MALAK
 Charlie, right? Call me Malak
 please. How are you, brother?

CHARLIE
 I'm well, thank you.
 (To Elizabeth)
 Mr. Brahim asked you to call him.

ELIZABETH
 Thanks, Charlie. By the way, Malak
 will be staying with us for a
 while. Please pick him up tomorrow.

CHARLIE
 Will do.

MALAK
 (To Elizabeth)
 Thank you again.

ELIZABETH
 It's our pleasure. See you
 tomorrow.

She surprises Malak with a hug.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Bye.

MALAK
 Bye. Bye Ludwig.

ELIZABETH
 (To Ludwig)
 Come on, boy.

They leave a joyous looking Malak outside the motel.

Malak looks up at the sky. He smiles. He nods. Things are
 looking good.

MALAK
 OK. OK, OK.

He watches them drive away with a somewhat mischievous grin.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Omar is preparing a pot of Flowering Tea. He pours the water in the pot and we watch the bundle of tea leaves unfurl.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth is watching a show on her tablet as Omar brings in the tea. He pours her a cup and then serves himself.

Ludwig enters the room with a doll in his mouth. He sits by the couch and rests his face on the doll. He looks sad. Omar pats him and rubs his head. Elizabeth notices.

OMAR
(To Ludwig)
It's OK.

Omar serves Elizabeth the tea.

ELIZABETH
Thanks, hun.

She takes a sip.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Hmm, it's good.

OMAR
How are you doing?

ELIZABETH
(Eyes on tablet)
Good. You?

OMAR
(Seriously?)
I'm great, Liz. Everything is great. Business is good. Got that new account. How 'bout this fucking weather!

ELIZABETH
(Engrossed)
Hm? That's good, sweetheart.

He snatches the tablet.

OMAR
Are you kidding me?

ELIZABETH
What are you doing?

OMAR
(Puzzled)
Why won't you cry?

She has no answer.

Omar is calm as he pleads with her;

OMAR (CONT'D)
Baby....cry. It's OK. The fucking
dog cried. Why won't you cry?

ELIZABETH
I don't know. I want to. I don't
know.

He gives her the tablet back.

She puts it away and rests her head on his shoulder.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
What's wrong with me?

OMAR
Nothing's wrong with you.

BEAT.

OMAR (CONT'D)
Maybe it's a good thing Malak is
moving in.

ELIZABETH
(Eager)
What should we have for breakfast?
I'll go get the good Halloumi
(cheese) in the morning. And some
fresh bread.

Omar is slightly jealous.

OMAR
Good idea.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - CAITLIN'S ROOM - MORNING

Elizabeth enters her daughter's room. She's looking for something but doesn't know what. Ludwig is on Caitlin's bed. He looks up at her with his big eyes.

ELIZABETH
Coming down today?

Ludwig looks away.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Yeah. I know. Me too.

She sits next to him. She looks around the room and is trying not to break. She kisses him and walks out.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Floor-to-ceiling windows in the large kitchen expose the backyard. There is an island in the middle and a small table behind it. Coffee is brewing.

Omar is setting the table. Clay bowls filled with green and black olives, Labneh (Greek yoghurt), olive oil, mint, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, honey, jams, stuffed mini-aubergines, Zaatar(Thyme) and a variety of soft white cheeses.

Elizabeth enters and is happy with the setup.

ELIZABETH

Nice.

OMAR

Still sleeping, you think?

ELIZABETH

Maybe. More for us.

She smiles and kisses Omar.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I'll make tea.

OMAR

OK. Shall I grill the Halloumi you brought?

ELIZABETH

Yeah, why not.

Omar grills the cheese. Elizabeth prepares the Moroccan tea when we hear a knock on the window. Malak is smiling ear to ear as he waves,

MALAK

Good morning.

OMAR

There he is! Morning.

He enters.

ELIZABETH
Hi, good morning.

Omar gives him a hug.

OMAR
Sleep well?

MALAK
Oh yes. Best sleep since I've been
in the country.

Elizabeth gives him a hug.

ELIZABETH
That's good. Check it out.

She shows him to the table.

MALAK
Wow. Reminds me of home.

OMAR
Africaaaa!

MALAK
Africaaaa!

ELIZABETH
Oregoon!

Laughter.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Sit, sit. I'll get the bread.

She takes the traditional Moroccan bread out of the oven.

OMAR
Halloumi is ready.

Elizabeth plates the bread and sets it on the table. She then
gets the Moroccan tea and breakfast is served.

MALAK
Wow. This is great. The tea smells
so good.

ELIZABETH
Oh do you want coffee? We have
coffee too.

MALAK

No this is fine, thank you.

OMAR

(To Elizabeth)

Honey, relax. Malak, please feel at home. Liz likes to spoil everyone but it's not going to last. Trust me.

Laughter. Omar doesn't laugh.

ELIZABETH

Hey!

Omar kisses his wife.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I just want him to be comfortable.

OMAR

(To Malak)

Are you comfortable?

MALAK

Very comfortable.

OMAR

(To Elizabeth; teasing)

He's very comfortable.

They dig in.

ELIZABETH

(Accepts it)

Alright, alright.

(To Malak)

So, what do you want to do today?

MALAK

I already applied to a number of jobs so I thought I would have a look around the city.

OMAR

Wow. What time did you get up?

MALAK

I get up at 6.

ELIZABETH

Oh, then you should come with me to Yoga in the mornings.

MALAK
Ahhh, I don't like yoga. Sorry!

OMAR
(Raises hand)
Up top.

They high five.

ELIZABETH
Men! Of course. OK, so we'll go
downtown. I'll show you around.

MALAK
I can take an Uber. You should
grieve; your daughter just passed
away.

The hosts are dumbfounded while Malak casually grabs a piece
of bread.

MALAK (CONT'D)
HMMMM, fresh. I love bread. I don't
like the repercussions of bread,
but I love bread.

Omar is staring at Malak trying to figure him out.

ELIZABETH
I'll take you downtown. Gives me
something to do.

Omar plays along.

OMAR
Let her take you or you'll never
hear the end of it.

MALAK
(Smiling)
OK. Thank you.

They eat. Elizabeth gives Omar a look. Omar is a bit hesitant
until,

OMAR
Malak, why don't you pass me your
CV and I'll see if we have any
openings?

ELIZABETH
Oh that's a great idea, honey.

MALAK
Thank you but I'd rather not.

OMAR
Huh?

MALAK
I mean...OK, this will sound strange, but I don't believe in profit or wealth.

OMAR
Come again?

MALAK
No, no, please don't get me wrong. I'm not against it but it's not my cup of tea.

Malak picks up the pot of Moroccan tea.

MALAK (CONT'D)
This, on the other hand.

He refills their cups as if nothing happened.

OMAR
(Baffled)
Thank you.

ELIZABETH
Thanks.

Elizabeth is as surprised as Omar. Malak is enjoying his breakfast.

MALAK
Hmmm.

INT./EXT. LIZ'S CAR - DOWNTOWN - DAY

Malak looks like a kid at awe while staring out of the window.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Liz is showing Malak around.

Liz points at something and Malak's response is "Wow".

Malak points at buildings and continues with "Wow".

He is like a child who's seeing things for the first time.
Liz looks happy; almost like a mother with her child.

INT. BURGER JOINT - AFTERNOON

MALAK

I have to tell you Liz, I've never had a proper burger. I've only seen them in the movies.

ELIZABETH

Are you serious? Don't you have a McDonald's or something back home?

MALAK

No.

ELIZABETH

Oh my God! You're going to love it. I'll order.

They sit at a table by a window. Malak has a burger, fries and a large coke.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're in for a treat. Dig in.

Malak takes a bite of the burger, chews then swallows.

MALAK

OH MY GOD!

ELIZABETH

Told you.

He eats some fries and washes it all down with the coke.

MALAK

I'm in heaven. How is this made?

Liz laughs.

ELIZABETH

Nobody knows. And nobody cares.

MALAK

Why would you? It's delicious.

He munches away as Elizabeth watches. She notices a mother and daughter happily striding along outside. Her mood shifts. Malak sees what she sees. He tries to bring her back,

MALAK (CONT'D)

You have to try my burger.

ELIZABETH

Hm? No I'm good with mine, thanks.

MALAK

Try these fries.

ELIZABETH

(Chuckles)

I've had them before. You go ahead and enjoy your meal.

MALAK

So you have a gallery, eh?

ELIZABETH

Yes. We've been working hard on it. We should open soon.

MALAK

It's a good place to have a gallery. A lot of people around.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, we got lucky with the space. I would take you today but it's just construction work right now. Nothing to see.

MALAK

(Jovial)

It's nice to be able to do what you like.

ELIZABETH

We're blessed.

MALAK

Yes you are. You are good people.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Malak.

MALAK

You will have another child.

He BURPS.

ELIZABETH

What?

MALAK

Excuse me. This coke is fantastic. There's so much sugar. I feel full of energy. I think.

ELIZABETH

What did you say?

MALAK

Huh? What did I say? Oh! You will have another child. You cannot rationalize death. It's just like love. It makes no sense. But it happens all the time. The memory of loved ones never leave you; in life or death. You will have to learn to live with it.

He munches on his fries.

MALAK (CONT'D)

(Childlike)

These fries, man...

She doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Liz is on the couch watching TV. She's about to fall asleep when Omar enters.

OMAR

Hi baby.

ELIZABETH

Hi. Long day, huh?

He kisses her.

OMAR

Yeah, I wouldn't be going if it wasn't for the acquisition. How are you?

ELIZABETH

Death is like love.

OMAR

What?

ELIZABETH
Makes no sense. Happens all the
time.

He sits with her. She holds him.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(Yawning)
Malak had his first burger today.

OMAR
Yeah? Did he poop?

They look at each other.

BEAT.

They laugh at themselves and their situation.

She holds him.

ELIZABETH
She's gone.

A BEAT of reminiscence.

OMAR
I know.

Omar cries.

OMAR (CONT'D)
I miss her. I smell her everywhere.

Liz caresses his face.

ELIZABETH
Ahh, baby.

OMAR
I'm missing a part of my soul, Liz.

She holds him tight.

He's venting for the both of them.

OMAR (CONT'D)
I remember stupid things. I
remember fun things. I remember
falls. I remember arguments. I
stopped eating *my* vegetables.

Elizabeth hisses.

OMAR (CONT'D)
 Ah, man! I need a drink. You want one?

ELIZABETH
 I'm going to sleep. Long day of walking around.

OMAR
 OK. Is he up?

ELIZABETH
 I think so.

He wipes his tears.

OMAR
 I love you.

ELIZABETH
 I love you too.

She heads to the bedroom; he goes the other way.

EXT. BRAHIM MANSION - GUEST HOUSE - EVENING

Omar knocks on the door. Malak answers.

OMAR
 Hey buddy.

MALAK
 (Happy)
 Hi Omar. How are you? How was your day?

OMAR
 Good. You want to have a drink?
 I'm sorry, do you drink?

MALAK
 Sure.

He steps out.

EXT. BRAHIM MANSION - BACKYARD - EVENING

Omar and Malak are sitting at a garden table with a bottle of Patron and two glasses. Omar pours him some Tequila.

OMAR
 Ever had Patron?

MALAK
No, what is it?

OMAR
Tequila.

MALAK
No, first time.

OMAR
It's a day of firsts for you, huh?

MALAK
Looks like it.
Cheers.

They clink and take a sip.

MALAK (CONT'D)
Mmm. Nice.

OMAR
Glad you like it. I can get you a
beer if you prefer.

MALAK
No, no, this is good.

OMAR
Great.

A few moments of silence.

OMAR (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something personal?

MALAK
Of course.

Malak takes another sip.

OMAR
How's Elizabeth with you?

MALAK
How do you mean?

OMAR
Well, this is, this is really hard
for me. I don't really...
Anyway, she is finding it difficult
to grieve.

MALAK

I noticed.

OMAR

Why do you think that is?

MALAK

Shock.

OMAR

I get that. But...I just
feel...there's something else.

MALAK

I'm not sure, brother. Maybe you
should see a counselor together.

OMAR

I offered but she refused.

MALAK

Omar, my brother, people are like
radio stations. We all have a
different frequency. Maybe let her
be for a while.

OMAR

Man, I'm really sorry to ask you
these things but...

MALAK

Don't be silly, Omar. Anytime,
brother. It's the least I can do.

OMAR

How's the job hunt?

Malak takes another swig.

MALAK

This is so good.
It's going well. I have two
appointments tomorrow. Elizabeth
offered to drive me again.

OMAR

Still don't want to work for the
rich?

Malak laughs.

MALAK

I didn't mean it like that.

OMAR

I know. I respect people with principles.
I'm glad you're here. At least she's around someone.

MALAK

Yes, it's good to be arondi peepil.

OMAR

Whoa! Maybe take it easy on the tequila.

MALAK

What just happened?
I think you're right.

OMAR

You don't want to go in with a hangover.

MALAK

No I don't.
This is a nice house, Omar. An app did all this?

OMAR

Can you believe it?

MALAK

(Childlike)

No!

Omar smiles.

Bit of silence until,

OMAR

You know Liz is...

MALAK

Don't be 'the man', Omar.
Everything works in time. Give it time.

Omar nods.

EXT. BUILDING 1 - COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Malak walks out of a building and gets into Elizabeth's car.

ELIZABETH

How was it?

MALAK

Eh! I don't think I'm going to get that one.

ELIZABETH

Why not?

MALAK

I was too honest and the HR manager didn't appreciate that.

ELIZABETH

Right. So don't be too honest. Nobody appreciates it. Don't lie. Just don't say everything that comes to your mind.

MALAK

OK.

ELIZABETH

Shake it off. Next one.

EXT. BUILDING 2 - COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Elizabeth double parks. Malak gets out.

ELIZABETH

Good luck.

MALAK

Thanks.

Elizabeth gets a call.

ELIZABETH

Hey.

What? We can't afford anymore delays. They were supposed to be done last week.

OK, I can't right now but I'll be there in an hour or so.

Bye.

She hangs up. A COLLAGE of family pictures and videos appears on the screen. She watches a video of Caitlin bossing construction workers around in the gallery. Everyone is all smiles in the video.

Elizabeth looks angry.

BEEEEEP.

She looks in the rear view mirror. The driver of the car behind her is gesturing for her to move.

She gets out.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
WHAT'S YOUR FUCKING PROBLEM?

CAR DRIVER
Lady, move your car.

ELIZABETH
You do know it's a steering wheel, right? GO AROUND, FUCK FACE, GO AROUND.

CAR DRIVER
Take it easy, lady.

ELIZABETH
YOU FUCKING TAKE IT EASY.

He drives around and gives her the finger.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
UP YOUR AAASS.

She opens her door.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(At Driver)
DIIIIIE.

She doesn't get in. She SLAMS SHUT the door.

She leans on the car and holds her head.

Moments later, she gets in the car.

She watches another video of Caitlin.

We see her sense of loss for the first time. She misses her daughter. She's yearning.

BANG.

A happy Malak SMACKS the window. He enters and while putting on his seat belt comments,

MALAK
No honesty! It worked. This one was better.

Elizabeth puts the phone away.

ELIZABETH

That's good.

Malak looks at her. Worried, he asks,

MALAK

What happened?

They drive off.

ELIZABETH

Nothing. Nothing. This guy, in his car, fighting over the way. It's nothing.

MALAK

I can take a taxi. You don't have to drive me around. Really.

ELIZABETH

I don't mind. But I have to go to the gallery soon.

MALAK

I'll tell you what, my next appointment is in an hour. Why don't you go to the gallery and drop me downtown?

ELIZABETH

Are you sure?

MALAK

Yes. I'll be a tourist for a bit.

ELIZABETH

OK.

INT. GALLERY - DAY

Liz enters to find construction in progress. She navigates her way around to the back office.

INT. GALLERY - BACKOFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She enters to meet her handsome middle-aged business partner WILLIAM, late thirties.

William is sitting behind his make-shift desk.

WILLIAM
(Surprised)
Hey.

ELIZABETH
Hi. How's it going?

He gets up and gives her a warm hug.

WILLIAM
Good. Good. How are you? How's Omar?

ELIZABETH
We're good.
What's the delay?

WILLIAM
It's like we expected; trying to get extra overtime. I'm fighting them so it doesn't get out of hand.

ELIZABETH
Is it working?

She turns to look out.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Doesn't look like it's working.

BEAT.

He doesn't want to get into it with her.

WILLIAM
You don't have to be here. I got this. You shouldn't be here.

ELIZABETH
It's my gallery too.

WILLIAM
You know that's not what I meant. Stop being like that.

ELIZABETH
You have to lean into these fuckers. You're too nice sometimes.

William acknowledges her state of mind.

WILLIAM
OK. I will. Sit down. You want a drink?

ELIZABETH
Do we have water?

WILLIAM
Sure.

He gets her a bottle of water.

ELIZABETH
How's Bella?

WILLIAM
She's...excited. And nervous.
Fingers crossed.

She hugs him tightly.

ELIZABETH
It's all going to be OK. I know it.
I feel it.

WILLIAM
(Stumped)
I hope so.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - AFTERNOON

Malak is walking around with an ice cream cone. He's all smiles when Jim bumps into him.

JIM
HEY! Malak.

MALAK
JIM. How are you, man? You work here?

JIM
No, I come to a restaurant down the road for lunch everyday. My favorite.

MALAK
Everyday?

JIM
Yeah. Did you eat? Come with. You'll love it. Healthy food. My wife has me on a regiment. And I'm actually enjoying it.

MALAK

I prefer burgers. But I'll hang out with you.

Malak takes a long lick of his ice cream.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Everything is delicious in this place.

JIM

Enjoying that ice cream?

MALAK

Very much so.

Malak looks down an alley.

MALAK (CONT'D)

So, everyday, huh? Don't you like change?

JIM

I'm a simple guy. I don't need much.

MALAK

You're almost African, Jim.

Jim laughs out loud.

JIM

You're a funny guy, Malak. By the way you'll meet my daughter Samira tonight.

MALAK

At the dinner. Great. I love children. They're so pure. So what's for lunch?

JIM

You like Quinoa?

MALAK

Ehh, I'm more of a Jazz man.

Jim laughs.

JIM

You're funny. Jazz man!

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

MEGHAN, mid-30's, is talking to Omar who is getting wine glasses and a bottle of red.

MEGHAN

I don't get it. Why won't she? Even just around you?

OMAR

I'm tired of pretending, Meg. Acting like it's OK. I can't keep this up anymore.

Liz enters.

ELIZABETH

(Joking)

Hey, hands off my man.

Jim enters.

JIM

Great. Just like college.

OMAR

(To Jim)

Oh God! You guys are so dumb.

MEGHAN

Normally my sweet husband needs a couple of drinks before he gets goofy. But tonight, I see...

Jim kisses Meghan.

JIM

I think Malak is rubbing off on me. Funny guy.

MEGHAN

(To Elizabeth & Omar)

What's that like? Him staying here?

OMAR

Like when you guys stay for the weekend.

ELIZABETH

Come on, let's go. It's rude.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The couples, Malak and 7 year old SAMIRA are dining.

MEGHAN
It's really good.

ELIZABETH
Thank you. I didn't realize how
hard the staff worked in the
kitchen.

OMAR
I did.

Jim snickers.

Samira is watching Ludwig in the backyard. She's not eating.

MEGHAN
(To Samira)
Honey, why aren't you eating?

SAMIRA
I'm not hungry.

Malak notices she's eyeing the dog and volunteers,

MALAK
You want to play with him?

SAMIRA
(To Omar; in Arabic)
Can I play with him?

OMAR
(In Arabic; smiling)
Of course, sweetheart.
(In English)
Your Arabic is getting better. Keep
it up.

MEGHAN
Samira, no. Auntie Elizabeth went
to great trouble for this meal.

ELIZABETH
It's OK, really.

OMAR
It's fine, Meghan.

MEGHAN
 (To Malak)
 Are you sure?

MALAK
 It's no trouble.
 (To Samira)
 Come on, let's go.

Malak and Samira leave to play with Ludwig.

JIM
 He's amazing.

MEGHAN
 Seriously.

ELIZABETH
 He's a blessing. Makes almost
 anything seem OK.

OMAR
 (Involuntarily)
 Almost.

Meghan tries to keep it cordial.

MEGHAN
 Thanks for inviting us. How are you
 doing?

ELIZABETH
 I'm OK.

MEGHAN
 (Stern)
 Don't be silly. Nobody can be OK.
 You don't brush this one under the
 rug.

OMAR
 (To Meghan; relieved)
 Thank you!

MEGHAN
 Who are trying to be strong for?

Jim holds Meghan's hand.

ELIZABETH
 I'm honestly not trying to be
 anything. This is how I'm dealing.
 I'm not putting on a show.

OMAR
How's Samira doing?

JIM
Still in shock. She's confused, the poor thing.

OMAR
I bet. Still learning Arabic, though.

MEGHAN
She misses studying with Caitlin. She keeps asking where people go when they leave earth. We say 'heaven'. She asks where is heaven? What do you say to that?

ELIZABETH
(Insincere)
The Bahamas?

They don't find it funny.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Sorry.
What did you say?

MEGHAN
What can you say? Kids today are so much smarter than we were at their age. So we said 'they go up above, beyond the sky'.

JIM
Then she asks how do you know there's a heaven?

ELIZABETH
(Surprised)
Good question. Wow.

JIM
Right? Seven years old; but it's so logical for a kid to ask.

Meghan notices Samira hugging Ludwig and Malak rubbing her back. Meghan is not uneasy but she is concerned.

JIM (CONT'D)
And what can you say to that?
'Because God told us there is'.

Elizabeth changes the topic.

ELIZABETH
I'm all alone next week, you guys
should come over.

Meghan gives her a caring and understanding look.

MEGHAN
OK, sweetheart.

OMAR
Just a day, two max. I'll get the
staff back so the house is not
empty.

JIM
L.A. again?

OMAR
Yup.

EXT. BRAHIM MANSION - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Malak is standing while Caitlin is playing with Ludwig.

MALAK
Tell me more about Caitlin, Samira.

SAMIRA
We were going to go on vacation
together. We were going to go
camping and go swimming and play.

MALAK
Your dad told me you and Caitlin
were best friends.

SAMIRA
Yes.
Malak, do you know why people die?

He squats.

MALAK
Yes.

He puts his hand on her head,

MALAK (CONT'D)
You're a very special girl, you
know that? I like you, Samira.

SAMIRA
I like you too, Malak.

MALAK
(To Samira)
Bye Samira.

SAMIRA
Bye Malak.
(To Meghan)
Mommy, Malak says I'm special just
like Caitlin.

The mood shifts. Elizabeth is half-smiling and half upset.
Meghan looks at Liz apologetically.

ELIZABETH
(To Samira)
You are sweetheart, you are.

Liz hugs Samira and kisses her. Meghan mouths "THANK YOU".

MEGHAN
(To Samira)
Say good night, darling.

SAMIRA
Good night.

Good nights all around as Meghan gives Liz a tight HUG.

INT./EXT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - DAY - MONTAGE - DAY 1

The staff are back and are working inside and outside the house.

The gardeners are landscaping, the chef is cooking, the maids are cleaning.

EXT. COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DOWNTOWN - MONTAGE - DAY 2

Charlie drops Malak off to his job interviews.

INT. GALLERY - DAY - MONTAGE - DAY 2

Charlie drops Malak off at the gallery. Malak brought lunch and hangs out with Liz and William.

Charlie is watching through the window and reporting to Omar on the phone.

Liz and William enquire about Malak's interviews; Malak crosses his fingers.

INT. OMAR'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE - DAY 3

Omar is leaving the office when he texts Liz:

"LEAVING NOW; I'LL SEE YOU THERE".

END MONTAGE

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Omar is at his daughter's grave. He places flowers on the grave and a small stuffed puppy on the tombstone. He then gets on his knees. With half a smile, he declares

OMAR
It's not Ludwig but I think you'll
like him.

Silence. Omar has a blank stare on his face.

Moments later,

OMAR (CONT'D)
Mom wanted to come but...you know
how she gets with work, right?
She loves you, Caty. I think she's
hurting the most.

BEAT.

OMAR (CONT'D)
I hope God explained why he took
you from us. I hope you're
peaceful.

He gets up.

OMAR (CONT'D)
I love you. I'll see you in my
dreams.

He leaves.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

The city's creme-de-la-creme have gathered for a special ballet performance of "MOZART'S REQUIEM". Everyone is decked out to the fullest.

The Brahims and Malak meet Jim and Meghan at the steps.

MEGHAN
Wow Malak, you look great.

MALAK
Thanks, Meghan. John Ford.

Laughter.

ELIZABETH
Tom. Tom Ford.

MALAK
Oh! Tom Ford. John's cousin.

Laughter.

Malak pats Omar on the back.

MALAK (CONT'D)
It's good to laugh. Thank you for
inviting me.

MEGHAN
We're happy to share it with you. I
think you're going to love it.

The ladies walk up with Malak by their side.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)
By the way, I spoke to a friend who
might have an opening in her
company.

MALAK
Oh, thank you so much. You're very
kind.

ELIZABETH
Who?

MEGHAN
Isa.

ELIZABETH
Oh of course.

MEGHAN
(To Malak)
Is tomorrow good for you?

MALAK
I'll have to check my schedule.
(then)
Yes, it's fine.

MEGHAN
 (Laughing)
 I'll put you in touch.

Elizabeth looks back at Omar and smiles at him. He smiles back.

JIM
 (To Omar; concerned)
 Hey, brother.

OMAR
 She didn't even show up, man. Made
 up the silliest excuse.

Jim puts his hand on Omar's shoulder to console him. Words are not necessary. They walk in.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

The ballet performance is phenomenal. Elizabeth checks on Malak.

ELIZABETH
 (Whispers)
 Can you follow?

He gives her a thumbs up.

Malak looks confused.

MALAK
 (Whispers to Omar)
 Do you know the story?

OMAR
 No. First time I see it. Shhh.

Malak sits back and enjoys the show. They're all enamored.

Malak rubs his index and then moments later, softly mimics the music with his lips and head movements. Omar notices this and, at first, is pleased but then observes Malak is on key. Strange, he thinks.

OMAR (CONT'D)
 (To Malak)
 You've seen this before?

Malak shakes his head.

MALAK
 Shhh.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - EARLY MORNING

Omar enters the kitchen with his overnight luggage. Elizabeth has made him breakfast.

We see LEAVES falling from the trees in the backyard. It's the beginning of FALL.

ELIZABETH
Good morning.

OMAR
Oh, I didn't realize you got up.

ELIZABETH
I made you breakfast.

OMAR
I don't have time. I'll just grab a coffee.

ELIZABETH
Eat something with your coffee.

OMAR
I'm not hungry.

He pours himself a cup of coffee.

ELIZABETH
I'm sorry about yesterday.

OMAR
(Calm)
I don't know how much more of this I can take, Liz. I only work so I don't have to watch you hide from it all.

ELIZABETH
I'm not hiding.

OMAR
Whatever you're doing, it's not helping.
Anyone.

Silence.

He drinks his coffee.

He kisses her on the head.

OMAR (CONT'D)
I'll see you tomorrow.

ELIZABETH
I love you.

He nods as he leaves.

Just before exiting,

OMAR
I love you too.

INT. LOV HEAD QUARTERS - RECEPTION

LOV company's reception area is bubbly. The marble floor has a giant sunflower designed into it. Heart emblems on the walls have quotes such as "Love what you do", "People over Profit", "Give before you take" and so on. Malak approaches the RECEPTIONIST.

A sign/counter above her head reads "Now helping our 1,298,777th soul". Malak reads the sign and smiles,

MALAK
Hi, I have a meeting with HR.

INT. LOV HEAD QUARTERS - HR OFFICE - DAY

Malak knocks on the door and enters to see a joyous looking ISABELLA sitting behind her desk.

ISABELLA
Hi, Malak?

MALAK
Yes.

ISABELLA
Come in. I'm Isabella.

MALAK
Pleasure to meet you.

ISABELLA
Have a seat.

He sits.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Your CV is impressive. I really liked the work you did in Africa.

MALAK

Thank you. I like what you guys do as well. Can you tell me a bit more, though?

ISABELLA

Sure. So we have an app that helps people help each other. Subscribers donate money and that money goes to people in need. Everything is online including the company's books. We use blockchain technology so you can click on your donation and see exactly where it went and what we did with it.

MALAK

What a great concept. Simple and effective.

ISABELLA

That's our CEO's motto. Keep it simple. Someone has extra money, someone needs it, put them together.

MALAK

I love it.

ISABELLA

Let me show you where I was thinking you would fit with us.

She turns her laptop around.

As Isabella explains his role to him, Malak rubs his index finger. He's almost not listening to her. It's as if...he's staring into her soul.

EXT. BRAHIM MANSION - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Malak and Elizabeth are having drinks and chatting.

ELIZABETH

That's great. So when do you start?

MALAK

Right away. As soon as I signed, I went and found a place. I'm so grateful for everything you and Omar did for me but I don't want to burden you anymore.

ELIZABETH
Don't be silly. Let's celebrate.
Tequila?

MALAK
(Happy)
Oh yes.

They drink and laugh and dance and drink some more until,

ELIZABETH
Ugh, I can't. I need to sleep.

She gets up. He grabs her arm.

MALAK
Come on, stay with me. I'll miss
you.

ELIZABETH
(Weird)
What do you mean?

She slowly pulls her arm away.

MALAK
I'm moving.

ELIZABETH
You don't have to leave right away.
At least wait till Omar comes back.

MALAK
OK, wait with me. Such a lovely
night.

ELIZABETH
(Snickers)
No I can't. All the gallery work
has got me exhausted. I don't know
how you do it.

MALAK
Africaaaa!

ELIZABETH
(Sarcastic)
I'm never going to be African. Good
night.

MALAK
Party pooper.

She gives him a dismissive wave.

He drinks and drinks and drinks. He gets up.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He gets some ice. Ludwig is hanging around with him. He pours himself another drink and moves to the living room.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Malak looks around at photos. He sits and pulls out the family album from under the coffee table. He goes through the pictures of the family. A picture of Caitlin makes him smile. He flips the album as he sips his drink. Liz is in almost every picture with Caitlin. He sees a picture of Caitlin on a beach in a bikini. His fingers caress the picture. He looks up.

Ludwig growls. Malak ignores him.

Malak finds a few DVDs near the photo albums. He puts one in and watches Caitlin's RECITAL.

Caitlin performs with gusto. She kicks ass and gets a standing ovation. Jim, Meghan and Samira are sitting with Omar and Liz. Caitlin rushes down from the stage, while being applauded, and runs towards her family, only to hug Jim.

CAITLIN

I was lost for a moment but I kept going and I found it. Like you taught me. I did good, right?

JIM

(Proud)

You did amazingly well, Caty. I'm so proud of you.

Caitlin hugs her parents then Samira.

Malak stands. He walks towards the stairs.

Ludwig follows him, growling.

MALAK

(Dismissive)

Yeah, Yeah.

Malak creeps up the stairs.

BARK.

Malak turns sternly at Ludwig who yields but growls softly.
He approaches Ludwig.

MALAK (CONT'D)
It's OK, boy.

He hugs Ludwig.

MALAK (CONT'D)
You first.
(then)
It's going to be OK.

Malak smothers him. Ludwig passes out.

Malak creeps back up the stairs. A few steps SQUEAK.

He reaches Liz's bedroom. He slowly turns the knob and opens the door. He enters.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIZ'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth is sleeping blissfully on her back.

He approaches.

He slowly removes the duvet.

A drunk looking Malak, eyes red and head tilted, gently places his hand on her chest.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - EARLY MORNING

Ludwig is barking at Omar who enters with his bags.

OMAR
Honey, I'm home.

Ludwig tries to get Omar's attention.

OMAR (CONT'D)
(To Ludwig)
What's up?

Omar hears a noise coming from the kitchen.

OMAR (CONT'D)
What is that, boy?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We hear CRYING as Omar enters. He hurries around the island to find Liz on the floor crying her eyes out. He rushes towards her and holds her.

OMAR

What's wrong, baby? What happened?

He looks at her. She's a mess.

OMAR (CONT'D)

What happened? Talk to me.

INT. MALAK'S OFFICE - DAY

Malak is going through some notes when we hear a KNOCK and Isabella enters.

ISABELLA

Hey, ready?

MALAK

Yes.

ISABELLA

Everyone's excited.

MALAK

Me too.

He gets up.

INT. LOV HQ - AUDITORIUM - DAY

Malak is holding a presentation for his colleagues.

He is standing on the stage where the screen behind him displays the title: "LOV-U".

MALAK

..so just as we practice what we preach here at LOV, we will encourage and promote teaching love in schools and universities as part of the curriculum. Loving life, loving what you do, loving adventure, loving curiosity. All of it will be part of the curriculum.

(MORE)

MALAK (CONT'D)

This will help students decide on the right path for their lives early on and not follow the traditional "I paid for your school so you will do as I say" model.

Laughter.

Malak is in his element. He's acclimated well and his accent has almost disappeared.

MALAK (CONT'D)

That's it. Any questions?

JOE

I have one.

JOE is a very well dressed and groomed man in his mid-30's. In the world of executives, Joe certainly looks the part.

MALAK

Yes, Joe.

JOE

How do you propose we convince the educational system on a state and federal level to change their curriculum?

MALAK

Isn't that what you guys do? Marketing?

Laughter. Joe is forced to laugh along.

JOE

It is. But you want to change the system.

MALAK

Not change the system. Add to it.

JOE

But kids are barely getting through now. They're having a hard time with the basics.

MALAK

Maybe because they don't love the basics.

ISABELLA

But don't they all have to learn the basics?

JOE

Exactly.

MALAK

Sure. But not for 10 years. It's pointless.

JOE

How can you say that?

MALAK

How's your math, Joe?

JOE

It's doing better now after the surgery.

Laughter. Malak genuinely laughs along.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's alright.

MALAK

How much calculus have you retained since school?

JOE

(Fine)

None.

MALAK

Like all of us here, I'm sure. The only math MOST people use is Algebra. Yet we were forced to study geometry and calculus. They even do that in university. To what end?

ISABELLA

Are you saying kids should know what they want to do in high school?

MALAK

Yes.

Give them 5 years of everything. And then let them decide.

JOE

I disagree. They're young. What do they know?

MALAK

They know what they want. We force them to do things they're not interested in. The result is they don't do well in those subjects or worse, fail. Now their dreams are delayed for another year.

ISABELLA

But isn't this how it's been forever?

MALAK

Correct. But are we doing better or worse? Worse. And we don't see it because we don't know how to do the math. Nobody cares that Mozart loved mathematics or Einstein sucked at sports or that both Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates were Harvard dropouts. Results are all that matter. And the best results are achieved when you do what you love and love what you do.

APPLAUSE.

Joe nods.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Isabella approaches Malak as he is gathering his papers and laptop.

ISABELLA

Good job.

MALAK

Thank you.

ISABELLA

I think you're on to something. It could work.

MALAK

I hope so.

ISABELLA

See you later.

MALAK

Bye.

A few colleagues give Malak the thumbs up. Joe approaches Malak as the room clears up.

MALAK (CONT'D)

(To Joe)

Good questions, Joe.

JOE

You really think this can work?

MALAK

You don't?

JOE

No. I really don't. You will fail.

MALAK

I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying.

JOE

Let me guess, Einstein?

MALAK

(Smiles)

Michael Jordan.

BEAT.

JOE

I don't like you.

Malak laughs.

MALAK

How is it you're in marketing?

Joe is baffled at the response.

MALAK (CONT'D)

With all that honesty, you should be head of operations. I'm not being sarcastic.

Malak walks away leaving a confused Joe behind.

INT. RESTAURANT - DOWNTOWN - AFTERNOON

Isabella is having lunch with Elizabeth. They're sitting by a window.

Elizabeth is glowing and looks happy.

ISABELLA

That's great news. I'm so excited for you. I told you it's going to work out.

ELIZABETH

Thanks, sweetheart. I'm in a good place. I love you guys. You, William who's been a great partner, Omar.

ISABELLA

It's all coming together.

ELIZABETH

It is, it is. The gallery looks amazing.

ISABELLA

Will has been raving about it. I can't wait for the opening.

ELIZABETH

Me too.

ISABELLA

I'm proud of you. You've come a long way.

ELIZABETH

It's been a tough couple of months but...
Anyway, how are you doing?

ISABELLA

Good. Everything's good.

ELIZABETH

Happy?

ISABELLA

Happy? Ehm, work in progress. But listen, anything you need, Lizzie; any time you need it.

ELIZABETH

I know sweetie, thanks.

ISABELLA

I'll drop the world for you.

ELIZABETH

OK, let's not get melodramatic.

ISABELLA

You're right. The east coast; I'll drop the east coast for you. West siiide!

ELIZABETH

Maybe give the hip-hop thing a break.

ISABELLA

Never. It saved me. You have to try it.

ELIZABETH

I'll pass.

ISABELLA

Meghan is coming.

ELIZABETH

No way!

ISABELLA

She gave in.
(Smiling)
You can't fight the feeling.

BEAT.

ELIZABETH

You think I need saving?

ISABELLA

(Warm)
We all do, baby, we all do.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - AFTERNOON

Malak reaches a restaurant. He looks around. He sees Jim crossing the street.

Malak goes down the alley behind a dumpster.

Jim is passing by when he hears "HELP, SOMEONE HELP ME".

Jim looks down the alley and sees feet behind the dumpster.

He walks towards it.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Jim sees Malak.

JIM
Hey man, are you OK?

MALAK
I think so. Give me a hand please.

JIM
What happened?

Jim extends his hand and Malak PULLS him down.

JIM (CONT'D)
HEY.

Malak holds Jim down and covers his mouth and nose with his hand.

MALAK
(Soothing)
You're OK, you're OK, you're OK.

Jim passes out. Malak gets up and gently lays Jim down.

MALAK (CONT'D)
You travel a lot, brother. Almost
didn't make it.

Malak places his hand on Jim's chest.

MALAK (CONT'D)
You're a good man, Jim.

Malak takes Jim's watch, wallet and phone.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Malak walks out of the alley. He waits for a moment. He sees a cop.

MALAK
Officer, I think there's a man
passed out down there.

The cop looks down the alley and sees Jim's legs.

COP
I think you're right. I'll check it
out, thanks.

The officer walks into the alley.

Malak leaves.

INT. MALAK'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Malak is working when Isabella enters.

ISABELLA
Busy?

MALAK
No.

ISABELLA
So I wanted to invite you to dinner
this weekend at our place.

MALAK
That sounds great.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry, do you have plans?

MALAK
No, I'm free.

ISABELLA
Great. I'll text you the address.

MALAK
OK, fantastic. I love home cooked
food.

ISABELLA
Any allergies?

MALAK
The opposite of fun.

She takes a moment to process that.

ISABELLA
You are a peculiar person.

MALAK
(Smiles)
Thank you.

THADIE, the 30 year old African PR specialist stands at the door. She waves at them.

THADIE
Hey guys. Malak, Jimmy Jam's after
work. Are you in?

MALAK
Hell yeah!

ISABELLA
(To Malak)
Wow, you've really taken to the culture.

MALAK
I'm keepin' it real, son!

Laughter.

THADIE
(To Bella)
Isabella, join us.

ISABELLA
No, you guys have fun.

MALAK
Come on! Join us.

ISABELLA
No I can't.

MALAK
Can't or won't?

ISABELLA
Can't.

MALAK
Or won't?

ISABELLA
CAN'T.

THADIE
Or won't.

ISABELLA
Oh my God, fine. I'll come.

THADIE
YESSS. Malak, you're in for a treat.
(Points at Bella)
This one? The coolest HR exec in the world.

MALAK
A drinker?

THADIE
Oh she throws DOWN!

ISABELLA
(To both)
Just remember, you asked for this.

Laughter.

SONG PLAYS: DRAKE - "NICE FOR WHAT"

INT. JIMMY JAM'S BAR - NIGHT

Song continues as we watch,

Malak, Thadie, Joe and their colleagues are doing shots.
Bella is in the middle.

They sing along: "And you're showing off but it's
alright...."

Bella lip syncs the rap and dances like a professional hip-
hop dancer.

She joins a couple of dancer friends. We watch their
choreographed dance.

ISABELLA
(Points at crew; singing)
You know dark days, you know hard
times.

Bella tears up a rug. She twerks on the breakdown.

CHEERS all around.

The madness winds down a bit.

INT. JIMMY JAM'S BAR - BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Bella and Malak are sitting in a corner booth.

MALAK
You got some skills.

ISABELLA
Most women take pilates or yoga. I
love dancing. Been taking lessons
for a couple of years.

She opens up to him.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
You know why people like you,
Malak? You're easy to talk to.

MALAK
That's nice. Thanks. You know why
people like you?

Isabella is waiting.

MALAK (CONT'D)
(Smiling)
You care about them. You treat them
like family. You have kids?

ISABELLA
I wish.

MALAK
I don't understand.

The booze kicked in.

ISABELLA
I wish I did. I keep trying.
(Looks up)
God knows I keep trying.

MALAK
I'm sorry.

ISABELLA
Don't be. You didn't know. If it
wasn't for dancing, I would have
lost my mind. I tried boxing, yoga
and meditation but I was too angry.
Arghhh. One of the girls from yoga
class hooked me up to a hip-hop
class. Saved my life!
Let me ask you this, since you're
easy to talk to and all. Why do you
think I am unable to have kids?

MALAK
(Shaking head)
It's..not your time?

ISABELLA
(Casual)
That's what everyone says. You're
not that special, then. How do you
know it's not my time?

MALAK

Let's talk about something else.

ISABELLA

It's OK. You can answer honestly.

MALAK

Let's get a drink. You want a drink?

ISABELLA

If it was my time I'd be a mother already?

Malak winces.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

By that logic, people who are starving are starving because it's not their time to eat.

MALAK

Fair enough.

BEAT; she waits for an answer.

Malak is trying to get a waitresses' attention. He does and gestures for "another round".

MALAK (CONT'D)

I don't know why. Maybe the only other explanation is you're trying too hard.

She's staring at him with glistening eyes.

MALAK (CONT'D)

You're desperate to have a baby. You should take it easy. Be happy in life. Relax. And it will happen when it happens. If it doesn't happen, it's not the end of the world. Don't put so much pressure on yourself.

(Casually)

Even if there is something physically wrong with you or your husband, you can still adopt. Maybe one of those starving kids you mentioned.

She chuckles. She wipes her eyes.

MALAK (CONT'D)
That's a bad joke!

ISABELLA
It *is* kinda fucked up. But I get your point.

MALAK
Isabella you're a good, decent, honest, loving human being. Be grateful. Live in appreciation not anticipation.

ISABELLA
(Captivated)
Fuck, man! That's good. DAMN! That's really good. Live in appreciation not anticipation. Where do you get this shit?

MALAK
Google.

She laughs out loud.

The waitress brings their drinks.

MALAK (CONT'D)
(To Waitress)
Thank you.

Song plays: FLORENCE & THE MACHINE - "SHIP TO WRECK"

ISABELLA
Heyy, you know Florence?

They drink.

Malak looks at his colleagues at the bar.

MALAK
Uhhh...

ISABELLA
No you idiot, the singer. Florence and the Machine.

MALAK
Oh! No.

ISABELLA
She writes great. "and oh my love remind me, what was it that I said."
(MORE)

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

I can't help but pull the earth
around me, to make my bed". That's
lit.

MALAK

Huh?

ISABELLA

Pull the earth around me, to make
my bed. What happens to you that
makes you write that well?

(Revelation)

It all comes from pain, right?. All
the best art comes from pain. Isn't
that strange? Their pain makes us
feel better - or deal better.

MALAK

Lit.

ISABELLA

OK, I'm going to go before I pass
out here. Next weekend. BBQ. My
place.

MALAK

Deal.

She leaves.

She comes back and gives him a hug and kiss on the cheek.

She leaves singing "SHIP TO WRECK"

ISABELLA

TO WREEEEECK!

She points at her colleagues;

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

ROCK ON, BITCHES.

They CHEER.

She bumps into Thadie on her way out.

THADIE

Hey, Bella. Leaving?

ISABELLA

You are a sexy motherfucker.

THADIE
 (Grinning)
 What's the policy on reporting HR
 to somebody?

Bella surprises her with a smooch.

ISABELLA
 AND you taste good.
 (Singing)
 TO WREEEEECK.

She leaves.

Thadie is stunned.

Malak is getting up as a drunk Joe sits in Bella's place.

JOE
 I-don't-like-you.

MALAK
 (Giggles)
 Hey, Joe.

JOE
 I looked you up, man.

MALAK
 Oh, OK.

JOE
 You're not what you say you are.

MALAK
 Ah, but which one of us is truly
 who they say they are? We are all
 created from our...

JOE
 OH CUT THE CRAP.

Malak doesn't lose his smile.

MALAK
 What's bothering you, Joe? What are
 you insecure about that you had to
 research *me*? Let me help you.

JOE
 Help me with what? You can't charm
 your way out of this.

MALAK

OK, let's play your game. What did you find out?

JOE

Your LinkedIn page and your Facebook page. They go back a few months. Just a few months. And not a lot of pictures either.

MALAK

You don't need Facebook in a village. We all know each other.

JOE

You don't even have a girlfriend.

MALAK

How do you know that?

JOE

Your posts. There's nothing personal in them. It's all about love and quotes about passion, being spiritual and the soul and what it means. BLA BLA BLAAA!

MALAK

What do you think it means?

JOE

(Poiting)

Don't do that. Don't do that. DON'T. Don't do that.

MALAK

(Almost laughs)

Do what?

JOE

Don't try to be suave and charming with mmmme. Ha? Not 'gon work. You charm people into lll-liking you. Only two people have your charm; a serial killer and Will Smith.

MALAK

I'm not a serial killer, bruh.

JOE

Who are you, man?

MALAK

Will Smith?
(Laughs)
Relax Joe, I'm the good guy.

JOE

What does that mean? I'm the good
guy! It's not a spy movie.

MALAK

I looked you up as well, my friend.
You have the intention to be better
but lack the fortitude.

BEAT. Joe is stumped.

JOE

Huh?

MALAK

You're lazy. You could have been
head of your department years ago.
You do enough just to get by.
You're always worried about
bullshit and you focus your energy
on the negative which is why
nothing positive is happening for
you.

BEAT.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Drink?

Joe nods in defeat.

Malak gestures to a waiter.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Joe, my friend, we create our own
world. Everything you have in your
life is your doing, and everything
you lack in your life is your
doing. Do you understand?

JOE

(Childlike)
I think so.

MALAK

What do you want, Joe? Ultimately.
What do you want out of life?

Joe tries to answer.

MALAK (CONT'D)

I'm not talking money, success, material things. What do you really want? Do you even know who you are? Who are you, Joe? I mean really who are you? Because you are not Joseph Glass, the marketing manager, son of your parents, brother to your siblings, the "man" in his group of friends that has X number of followers on social media. That is not the sum of you. That, my friend, is sheer coincidence.

The waiter serves them their drinks.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Flip of a coin. You could have been born to the Queen of England OR an African woman living in a refugee camp, damn near starving to death. Or - an ant. You could have been born an ant. We don't get to decide how we are born, Joe. We get to decide how we live. Who are you?

Malak raises his glass.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Cheers.

They clink and sip on their drinks.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Ahhh. How's my charm now?

Malak gets up.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Lest ye be judged, Joe.

Malak walks away leaving a perpetually mystified Joe to his thoughts.

We see an expression of "close call" on Malak's face. He rubs his index finger.

He walks up to Thadie at the bar.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Hello, African.

THADIE
Hey. Right back at ya.
I was just telling the guys
Isabella kissed me.

MALAK
I can't say I blame her.

THADIE
Eeeasy, tiger.

MALAK
You know there's a rumor in the
office that the two of us will
probably get together at some
point.

THADIE
Is that right? And what do you
think of that?

MALAK
I think we should do some shots.

THADIE
I agree.
(To Bartender)
Bobby, two golds please.

MALAK
I just learned that men need pick
up lines in order to talk to women
in bars.

THADIE
Oh this is going to be fun. Did you
learn any?

Malak hesitates then gives it his best shot.

MALAK
What time do you get off?

Thadie doesn't like the line but plays along.

THADIE
Ugh! Fine.
I get off at 6, why?

MALAK
You can pick me up after and thank
me later.

THADIE

(Dismayed)

Oh my God! Who taught you that? Was it Joe? Because he has no game.

MALAK

(Grinning)

I can neither confirm nor deny.
(then)
Tell me about you.

THADIE

What would you like to know?

Two gold tequila shots are served.

They knock them down.

MALAK

(Wheezing)

Everything.

She laughs.

THADIE

I thought you liked tequila.

MALAK

Checking up on me?
I would like to know everything.
Where did you grow up?

THADIE

South Africa.

MALAK

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

THADIE

No.

MALAK

What! Come on.

THADIE

Nooo.

MALAK

Is it that bad? I promise I won't laugh.

She succumbs.

THADIE

(Fast)

I wanted to be a clown.

He laughs out loud.

MALAK

I'm sorry, you knew I was going to laugh at that. It's not fair.

THADIE

I know. That's why I didn't want to say it. Everyone laughs.

MALAK

First boyfriend.

THADIE

Fucking Roger.

MALAK

That was quick.

THADIE

Asshole.

MALAK

Last boyfriend.

THADIE

Lisa.

Malak computes then volunteers,

MALAK

Oh we are so hooking up.

She laughs out loud.

MALAK (CONT'D)

(Smiling)

You're a free spirit. You let love in. I love that.

She didn't expect that. She doesn't know what to say.

THADIE

Ehhh, OK. What about you?

He pulls her to him and kisses her. She kisses back.

INT. MALAK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malak opens the door. Thadie is holding him. They enter kissing. She walks over to his bedroom. He drops himself off on the couch. She comes back out.

THADIE
Where's your bed?

MALAK
Not delivered yet. New place; I told you we should have gone to yours.

She notices the apartment is very clean and very minimal. She gets on top of him. They make out. He starts giggling.

THADIE
What!?

MALAK
I have to see it.

THADIE
Is this a pick up line? It's not working.

MALAK
No, no. Your clown moves.

THADIE
NO.

MALAK
(Laughing)
Please. I'm just gonna keep imagining it. This night won't go anywhere.

She gets off him and stands.

THADIE
Fine.
(Firm)
You can't tell anyone.

MALAK
(Giddy)
I won't. I won't.

She does her clown act which is quite good; almost Chaplin-
esque. She ends it by jumping on him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALAK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Malak and Thadie are holding each other asleep on the sofa.
They're fully clothed.

She slaps him. Malak wakes.

MALAK
What the...

Thadie wakes up.

THADIE
Oh my God, did I slap you?

MALAK
Yes. How did you know?

THADIE
(Snickering)
Not my first time. It's your fault.

MALAK
Huh?

THADIE
All that clown talk made me dream
of the circus. I was performing.

She's laughing.

MALAK
Since you abused me, how about you
perform some coffee.

THADIE
OK.
Good morning.

MALAK
Good morning.

They kiss.

BOTH
Ugh.

THADIE
How do they kiss in movies?

MALAK
Brush your teeth, people.

He gets up to go to the bathroom. She goes to the kitchen.

THADIE
Any plans today?

MALAK
I have an errand to run but I'll be
free later.

THADIE
Cool.

Thadie notices something outside and walks over to the
window.

THADIE (CONT'D)
It is! It's starting to snow.

MALAK
REALLY?

He runs over to her side and is delighted to see,

MALAK (CONT'D)
Snow!
(Childlike)
Woow.

She looks at him and realizes,

THADIE
You've never seen snow before?

MALAK
No. Let's go outside.

They run outside.

EXT. MALAK'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Thadie watches Malak raise his hands trying to capture snow
flakes.

He opens his mouth to taste the snow.

She giggles.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

An upper middle-class neighborhood. Malak is driving and listening to classical music. A MAN is walking his dog on the curb and a WOMAN is jogging on the other side.

Malak sees Samira walking home from school. She's wearing her school uniform; a shirt with the school's emblem and a skirt. He pulls up next to her.

INT. MALAK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MALAK

Hi Samira. How are you? Remember me?

SAMIRA

Oh, hi Malak. Yes. How are you?

He stops the car.

MALAK

I'm good, sweetheart. Come on in, let me drop you home.

SAMIRA

Ehm, do you know where it is?

MALAK

Yes, it's just down the road right?

SAMIRA

OK. Thank you.

She gets in.

He drives on.

MALAK

How's school?

SAMIRA

Not bad.

MALAK

What did you learn today?

SAMIRA

We learned about the planets.

MALAK

Oh, I love astronomy. Isn't it fascinating?

SAMIRA

It is.

MALAK

Did you have a good vacation?

SAMIRA

Ehh, not really.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

She is uncomfortable.

SAMIRA (CONT'D)

I still miss Caitlin.

MALAK

I understand. It takes time.

They reach her home.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Listen, you're a very special girl.

He holds her hand. She looks at it, confused.

MALAK (CONT'D)

The bond you had will never be broken.

EXT. MALAK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

We don't hear or see what's happening in the car except for, Malak leaning over Samira.

The man walking his dog approaches the car suspiciously.

Samira gets out. Malak drives off.

Samira is crying. The man approaches her.

MAN

What's wrong, sweetheart? What happened?

INT. ISABELLA'S OFFICE - DAY

Malak enters.

MALAK

Hey, can I bring someone this weekend?

ISABELLA

Oh that's right, I heard you hooked up. Been hanging out for the whole week.

MALAK

(Smiling, shaking head)
They love their gossip, these guys. Yeah, I like her.

ISABELLA

Me too. Thadie is great. Of course you can.

MALAK

Oh no, I didn't mean Thadie.

Isabella is confused.

MALAK (CONT'D)

Kidding.

ISABELLA

(Scoffs)
You two are made for each other.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - EVENING

Winter is in full swing with heavy snow.

Omar is dropping Liz off. He double parks.

ELIZABETH

Are you sure you don't want to come with?

OMAR

Pretty sure, baby. I'm happy you're doing it. Maybe you can give me private lessons.

Elizabeth smiles then kisses Omar on the lips.

OMAR (CONT'D)

What was that for?

ELIZABETH
 For being my rock.
 I love you.

OMAR
 I love you too, baby. Have fun.

She gets out.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

About TWENTY DANCERS of ALL AGES are in class. Liz enters and finds Bella.

ISABELLA
 Wassup.

ELIZABETH
 Hey. Ready to crunk. That's what they call it, right?

ISABELLA
 (Laughing)
 Not anymore.

A hyped-up, cheesily-dressed Meghan approaches.

MEGHAN
 Wassup, yo.

ELIZABETH
 (Giggling)
 Oh God!

MEGHAN
 (To Liz; points)
 Isa's making me do it.

ISABELLA
 I didn't tell you to talk like that. Or dress like that.

MEGHAN
 Keepin' it real, son. Bars!

Laughter.

Liz hugs them. They're surprised.

ELIZABETH
 I love you guys.

MEGHAN
 (Old self)
 Oh, baby, we love you too.

Isabella kisses Elizabeth.

Jim shows up.

JIM
 Sorry I'm late.

ELIZABETH
 Whaaat!

Jim kisses Meghan.

JIM
 Wassup wassup.

ELIZABETH
 (To Jim)
 You too?

Jim looks at Meghan confused. She puts her fist up as a 'don't worry about the haters'. He bumps it.

MEGHAN
 That's wassup!

ISABELLA
 (Idiots)
 Come on, lets get in.

ELIZABETH
 OK, let's rock.

MEGHAN
 (Walking)
 Wrong genre, bitch.

Elizabeth mouth 'what the fuck' to Isabella who shakes her head.

The class begins.

DANCE COACH
 OK, just like last week. Feel the
 beat, energy up, let's go.

The music plays and Elizabeth is following the routine well. Isabella is on point. Jim is a surprisingly good student.

Meghan is freestyling and really feeling herself.

Elizabeth gives it her all when they start CRUNKING.

Classmates cheer with "hey, hey, hey".

INT. DANCE STUDIO - LATER

Bella, Meghan and Liz are in the corner drenched and watching the rest of the class. Jim is right in the mix of things.

MEGHAN

Look at my guy go. Who would have thought!

ISABELLA

I'm so happy you guys came.

MEGHAN

Thanks for nagging, Isa. I think I'm going to stick with it.

ELIZABETH

It's amazing.

ISABELLA

Glad you're enjoying it.

ELIZABETH

I'm definitely letting it all out.

ISABELLA

That's good. How's the gallery?

ELIZABETH

We're almost there. We're excited. Come over this weekend.

ISABELLA

I can't this weekend. Maybe next week? Lets have a ladies night out.

ELIZABETH

Sounds good.

They cheer the dancers but mostly Jim, "hey, hey".

EXT. ISABELLA'S HOME - BACKYARD PATIO - EVENING

Isabella and her husband William are hosting Jim, Meghan, Malak and Thadie. A middle-class home; simple and inviting. A blanket of snow covers the grass.

William is manning the BBQ, grilling ribs. Tree lights provide additional warmth to the friendly setting. Jim and Malak are chatting with William. They're all having a beer.

JIM

Malak, you're not going to believe how good these ribs taste.

MALAK

Nice.

JIM

I tried to make them but he won't give up his secret.

MALAK

What's the secret?

WILLIAM

Love.

Laughter.

JIM

Come on! It's not like I'm going to open a restaurant.

WILLIAM

If I tell you, you'll never be this excited again.

MALAK

Valid point.

Malak looks at the kitchen,

MALAK (CONT'D)

Wassup with the cocktails?

INT. ISABELLA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Isabella is preparing a pitcher of Mojito. Meghan is pulling mint leaves from their stems. Thadie is slicing limes.

MEGHAN

Where did you meet?

THADIE

At work.

MEGHAN

Oh! And how does HR feel about this?

ISABELLA

HR is fine with it. Where else are you going to meet someone?

THADIE

How did you and William meet?

ISABELLA

At a gallery. He was looking for a new piece of art and then saw - *this* piece of art.

Meghan laughs. Thadie smiles.

THADIE

(Curious)

How do you know when someone's a keeper?

ISABELLA

You have to be comfortable with them. They treat you with respect and they listen. It's important they listen. If he's not listening, get rid of him.

MEGHAN

That's right. Jim is an idiot.

Laughter.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

No, I love him but he's so...simple. He assumes everyone is a decent person.

THADIE

Ahh.

MEGHAN

But he loves me unconditionally and he pays attention. Sometimes I think he takes notes.

Laughter.

ISABELLA

He *is* attentive, isn't he? That time you lost your job?

Meghan hands Thadie the mint. Thadie uses a muddler to crush the mint and lime.

MEGHAN

Oh! OK, so I lose my job and I'm depressed. He comes home late. Now I'm angry. Why is he late?

Meghan grabs a bottle of rum.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

He went to my favorite confectionery downtown and bought me my favorite ice cream and cookies.

THADIE

Whaaat!?

They mix the Mojito.

ISABELLA

Isn't that the sweetest?

THADIE

(Stresses)

YEAH!

MEGHAN

Wait. Then he stays up all night with me and gets me fired up to plan my future. MY future. "What do you want to do, honey?", "Who do you want to be honey?". He made me feel like losing that job was the best thing that happened to me.

Thadie is in wonderment.

ISABELLA

It was.

MEGHAN

Absolutely was. You keep that guy. And you start a family with him ASAP.

Isabella's mood changes ever so slightly.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God, I'm sorry. I didn't..

ISABELLA

(Shaking head)

Don't be silly.

Thadie doesn't want to ask.

Isabella breaks the tension.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
 (To Thadie)
 We've been trying for a while but
 it's not working out.

Thadie holds Isabella's hand.

THADIE
 It will, I'm sure. In good time.

ISABELLA
 You're sweet.
 (Joking)
 Remember when you were sweet,
 Meghan?

Meghan takes a sip from the bottle of rum.

MEGHAN
 1978. It was raining.

A BEAT of confusion then,

Laughter.

Malak knocks on the window.

MALAK
 Hellooo, we're thirsty.

THADIE
 Coming, dear.

EXT. ISABELLA'S HOME - BACKYARD

The group is eating and drinking. The pitcher is almost empty.

Thadie is sitting on Malak's lap.

MALAK
 I never thought opening a gallery
 took that much work.
 Congratulations.

WILLIAM
 Thanks. I'm just glad we're almost
 done with it. It's been over a
 year.

THADIE
Hey, any big shot celebrities
coming?

WILLIAM
I don't know yet.

ISABELLA
Liz was saying there could be one
or two.

Jim is trying to figure out the taste in his mouth and makes
a displeasing sound.

MEGHAN
Uhh! What is wrong with you? Stop
it.

JIM
Cinnamon. Is it cinnamon?

Malak laughs. Thadie looks at him baffled. Malak waves it
off.

WILLIAM
(Laughing)
No, Jim, it's not.

JIM
Damn it.

MEGHAN
(To Jim)
Is this the recipe thing again?
Leave it alone.

JIM
(To Malak)
What do you think?

MALAK
Maybe coriander.

JIM
Coriander? Are you out of your
mind? That's an insult to ribs.

WILLIAM
That actually is an insult to ribs.

MEGHAN
(To Jim)
Why can't you let it go?

JIM
I need to know. I have to know.

ISABELLA
I know how to get it off your mind.

She gets up.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Lets make some drinks and we can
get our groove on.

MEGHAN
I'm in.

WILLIAM
Me too.

THADIE
Alright.

JIM
Nutmeg. Is it nutmeg?

Isabella grabs Jim's hand as they walk in.

ISABELLA
Come with me, nutmeg. I'm going to
teach you how to dance.

MEGHAN
Uh-oh.

As they get up,

MEGHAN (CONT'D)
Malak, have we met before?

MALAK
I don't think so. I haven't been in
the country long.

MEGHAN
(Huh!)
I feel like I know you.

INT. ISABELLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabella puts on some hip hop music and dances with Jim.

William brings out a bottle of Tequila and shot glasses.

WILLIAM
(To Malak)
I hear you're a fan.

MALAK
I love this stuff.

The four do shots while Isabella and a hilariously dancing Jim get into the groove.

Dance partners mix, more shots are downed, the mood is electric.

Isabella gets tipsy then instructs everyone to sit. She plays one of her favorite songs and puts on a show. She's a very good hip-hop dancer.

The gang cheers with 'Oh's' and 'Ah's' and 'Holy Shit's'.

The upbeat song ends and a slow song plays.

William is sitting next to Jim and Meghan.

Isabella gets on top of William and grinds.

Jim tries to copy her moves on Meghan. He's getting the moves right but it looks all kinds of wrong.

MEGHAN
(To Jim)
Work it, bitch.

JIM
Baby, why? Why do I have to be a bitch?

MEGHAN
I'm sorry, honey. Keep going, keep going.

Malak and Thadie are cracking up.

Malak takes her hand and they get up to slow dance. They kiss.

William and Isabella are having a passionate moment. Isabella whispers in his ear,

ISABELLA
I'm OK. I'm OK with it. I love you.

WILLIAM
I love you.

Isabella kisses him.

Jim slaps her hand,

JIM
HEY, I'm trying to follow you. Stop
kissing.

Isabella laughs and gets off William.

ISABELLA
Bathroom break. When I come back,
SHOTS.

On her way to the bathroom, she pinches Thadie's butt.

THADIE
(Grinning)
Hey, hey.

MALAK
You want a drink, babe?

THADIE
No, I'm good. Thanks.

Malak looks at Isabella walking out. He rubs his index finger as he goes to the kitchen to get a drink. Thadie joins her new friends on the couch.

INT. ISABELLA'S HOME - TOILET

A happy looking Isabella is washing her hands. She opens the door to walk out and Malak pushes her in.

ISABELLA
What are you...

Malak puts his hands on her either side of her face. She tries to resist.

He stares into her eyes.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
What are you doing? You're hurting
me. Stop.

A single tear falls from her eye.

MALAK
That is going to happen.

He puts his hand on her chest.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

The gallery opening party is in full swing. Liz and William are charming their guests.

Omar, Meghan, Jim and Isabella are chatting around a table. They're sipping on their champagne except for Isabella who is having a cocktail with orange juice.

OMAR

It's going well, huh?

MEGHAN

Yeah, I'm so happy for them. It's really impressive.

ISABELLA

It's good to see her happy.

Omar nods.

JIM

When did you start drinking screwdrivers?

ISABELLA

College. This whole thing is reminding me of the old days.

OMAR

Cheers.

They cling their glasses. Liz and William come over.

Meghan points at an abstract piece.

MEGHAN

OK so everything looks great. But that one? Come on! Samira can draw that.

JIM

I can draw that.

WILLIAM

(Smiling)

If you draw that Jim, I'll buy it for three hundred thousand.

JIM

(Hand out)

Paint brush.

Laughter.

Liz kisses Omar.

OMAR
What's the vibe like?

ELIZABETH
It's good. Everyone is excited. And
I think it's genuine too.

WILLIAM
It is, right?
(Excited; claps)
Lets drink.

William waves over a waiter serving champagne.

ELIZABETH
(To Isabella)
Since when do you drink
screwdrivers?

JIM
College. Duh!

Everyone looks at Jim.

JIM (CONT'D)
What! Am I wrong?

ISABELLA
I was saying it reminded me of the
good old days.

ELIZABETH
You didn't drink screwdrivers in
college.

She grabs Isabella's hand.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Come on, let's get a real drink.
You guys good?

A collective 'yes'.

They go to the bar.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(To Bartender)
Two champagnes please.

ISABELLA
No, I'm fine.

ELIZABETH
What's wrong with you?

INT. THADIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malak and Thadie are having a movie night. Popcorn, sodas and half empty bags of chocolate are littered on the coffee table.

They're snuggling; her head resting on his chest. Thadie is dozing off.

MALAK
Babe, do you believe in love at first sight?

THADIE
No.

MALAK
Seriously?

THADIE
Seriously. Maybe a connection but not love.

MALAK
You're very wise when you're falling asleep. How come you're not that...

A soft slap on his arm.

A passing car's lights momentarily beam across the room.

THADIE
What do *you* believe in?

Caressing her head,

MALAK
Souls. I believe nothing ever dies.

THADIE
That doesn't...make...shensh.

She gets cozier. He looks at her,

MALAK
(Smiling)
A soul is never born, honey. So a soul can never die.
(MORE)

MALAK (CONT'D)

They just - are. And they all have a purpose. They're our link to each other.

She falls asleep.

Malak continues,

MALAK (CONT'D)

(Softly)

When you love someone, you surrender a piece of your soul to them.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIZ'S ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

MALAK

(Voice)

That's why they can always feel you.

A drunk looking Malak, eyes red and head tilted, slowly places his hand on Liz's chest.

MALAK (CONT'D)

(Voice)

You're always in their heart...

Her chest glows.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Malak approaches Ludwig. He pats him on the head and hugs him.

MALAK

(Voice)

Sometimes they can sense your presence. At times they can even smell your scent.

Malak smothers him. Ludwig's body glows.

INT/EXT. ALLEY - DAY - FLASHBACK

MALAK

(Voice)

Love that is unconditional.

Malak holds Jim down and covers his mouth and nose with his hand.

MALAK (CONT'D)
 (Mouths)
 You're OK, you're OK, you're OK.

Jim's chest glows.

INT. GALLERY - OFFICE - NIGHT

Isabella and Elizabeth are talking. Isabella is agonizing over her dialog.

INT. MALAK'S CAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Malak places his hand on Samira's knee. He puts his other hand on her chest. She submits and is compliant.

MALAK
 (Voice)
 Pure love.

Her chest glows.

EXT. MALAK'S CAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

MALAK
 (Voice)
 The kind of love that makes you cry
 when you accept loss and decide to
 let go.

Samira gets out of the car crying.

The man walking his dog rushes towards her and asks,

DOGWALKER
 Are you alright, sweetheart?

SAMIRA
 (Crying)
 I miss my friend.
 (then)
 My friend died.

The man is heartbroken.

INT. BRAHIM RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

Omar enters to find Liz crying.

MALAK

(Voice)

You cry to let go. Not let go of
their memory but of the pain
they're not going to be around
anymore...

INT. ISABELLA'S HOME - TOILET - FLASHBACK

MALAK

(Voice)

...in the same form.

Malak pushes Isabella in. He puts his hands on either side of her face. She stops resisting. She looks peaceful.

A tear falls from her eye.

He puts his hand on her chest.

MALAK (CONT'D)

(Voice)

Nothing ever dies. If you truly
loved someone you lost, they never
leave you. They will always be with
you; in one form or another.

Her body glows.

INT. GALLERY - OFFICE - NIGHT

Elizabeth pulls Isabella in and hugs her tightly.

ELIZABETH

Oh my God, that's amazing. I'm so
happy for you.

Liz rubs her back. Isabella is relieved and pleasantly surprised.

ISABELLA

I didn't know if I could...

Elizabeth doesn't let go.

ELIZABETH

Oh, sweetheart, no, no.

Omar opens the door. Jim is behind him.

OMAR
What's going on?

ELIZABETH
They're pregnant.

Omar smiles from ear to ear.

OMAR
WHAAAT!?

He hugs her.

JIM
THAT'S AMAZING. Drinks.

It hits him.

JIM (CONT'D)
Ohhh!

Isabella is almost in tears.

OMAR
I'm so happy for you. We all are.

INT. THADIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malak looks at Thadie with loving regret.

MALAK
You are my angel. We'll meet again.

THADIE
(Groggy)
Huh? Did you say something?

MALAK
Nothing, honey. Go back to sleep.

She gets comfortable.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

A POLICE OFFICER is strolling down the street when he spots an African American kid running in his direction.

The officer grabs the kid.

POLICE OFFICER
Hey hey hey, why are you running?

The officer is - Jim.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
Oh, hey Jim. I got in.

JIM
(Smiling)
I KNEW IT. COME ON!

They do their special handshake.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
Thanks to you.

JIM
You did all the work, young man.
Your parents must be proud.
Juilliard!

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
I'm on my way to tell them.

JIM
Wow.
Just, wow. I'm so happy for you.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
You wanna come with?

JIM
Nah, I got lunch plans.
(then)
Give me a hug.

They hug.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
I'll see you later.

JIM
OK. Don't run. Walk.
(Gestures)
Take it all in.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
(Nodding)
You're right. Bye.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

Meghan, Samira, Isabella and William are sitting by the window. They have their drinks.

Officer Jim joins them.

Samira is reading what looks like a school book. The others are going through the menu.

WILLIAM

(To Jim)

What will it be on your cheat day, buddy?

JIM

Old school; burger and fries. Like Yeezy says, 'I'm a sucker for pain.'

ISABELLA

(Laughs)

Weezy.

JIM

Weezy, Yeezy, why do they all sound like they have a cold?

MEGHAN

(To Isabella; sarcastic)

Thanks for teaching him rap. It's working out great.

JIM

Oh, guess who got into Juilliard?

MEGHAN

No wayyy, that's amazing.

JIM

I'm so proud of that kid.

ISABELLA

Congrats.

WILLIAM

Well done, buddy.

JIM

Thanks.

A LATINO waiter arrives.

TONY
Can I take your order?

ISABELLA
(To group)
I'm ready.

She looks up at him and pauses.

JIM
I'll have the burger with fries.

MEGHAN
Tuna salad.

WILLIAM
That sounds good. I'll have what
she's having.

ISABELLA
(To Tony)
I'm sorry, have we met?

TONY
(Smiles)
I don't think so. But you never
know, maybe we will one day.

ISABELLA
Do you go to a hip-hop class on
24th street?

TONY
(Cordial)
No I don't. Can I take your order?

ISABELLA
Yeah, the fajita please.

TONY
Great.

MEGHAN
(To Samira)
Samira, what do you want?

Samira doesn't look up.

SAMIRA
Chicken. Please.

MEGHAN
Chicken nuggets for her.

TONY
Great. Thanks.

He leaves.

SAMIRA
Malak.

Isabella turns to Samira.

ISABELLA
What did you say, sweetheart?

SAMIRA
Malak. It means 'Angel' in Arabic.

We see she's reading a book titled "Easy Arabic".

She's on words that begin with 'M'. She points to it.

SAMIRA (CONT'D)
Malak means angel. Right, dad?

JIM
That's right, sweetheart. And
you're my angel.

Tony is behind the counter getting another order. He takes it, puts it on a tray, walks out to the table.

He almost bumps into Thadie as she walks in.

TONY
Oh, excuse me.

He doesn't stop but they have a moment. He serves the table while looking at her. Her rubs his index finger with his thumb.

She sits at the counter.

He comes back.

TONY (CONT'D)
Hi.

THADIE
Hi.

TONY
What can I get you?

DINER MANAGER
Hi, Thadie. Usual?

THADIE
Hey! Yes please.

TONY
Sorry, have we met before?

THADIE
I don't think so.

DINER MANAGER
This is Antonio.

TONY
Tony.

THADIE
Nice to meet you, Tony.

TONY
(Nodding)
Nice to meet you too.

DINER MANAGER
Tony is new.
(To Tony)
And he has some orders to get to.

Tony gets back to work. He puts in his orders and waits for his pick-up.

He walks back over to Thadie.

TONY
So where are you from?

THADIE
African-American.

TONY
You're kidding! You don't look it.

THADIE
(Chuckling)
OK, smart ass. I meant half South African and half American.

TONY
I've been to South Africa.
Whereabouts?

The chef sticks his head out and places two plates on his counter. He smiles when he RINGS the bell and alerts Tony to a,

CHEF
PICK UP.

Tony looks at him annoyed.

TONY
(To Thadie)
Be right back.

Tony takes the plates and adds,

TONY (CONT'D)
(To Chef)
Should've been a comedian.

DINER MANAGER
Take the trash out when you're done
please.

TONY
Sure.

He serves the table and walks into the kitchen to take out
the trash.

EXT. BEHIND THE DINER - CONTINUOUS

Tony throws the trash and decides to have a smoke.

He lights his cigarette and is thinking.

He's making silly smiley faces.

TONY
You like to dance? Wanna go, wanna,
wanna sgo dancing?

He blows cigarette smoke.

TONY (CONT'D)
(Mocking)
You like to dance?
Why not ask her if she likes to
breathe?

He finishes smoking and goes back in.

INT. DINER - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tony sees Thadie leaving with a takeaway bag.

He walks out after her.

DINER MANAGER
Hey Casanova, get back to work.

Tony gestures 'give me a minute'.

EXT. DINER - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

He sees Thadie waiting to cross the street. He hurries to her and bumps into Liz, Omar and Caitlin, who drops her teddy bear.

TONY
Oh I'm so sorry. Here.

He picks it up and hands it to Caitlin.

ELIZABETH
(To Tony)
Thank you.
(To Caitlin)
Say thank you, honey.

CAITLIN
(Angelic smile)
Thank you.

He tries to follow Thadie but a reflection of LIGHT from a passing bus suddenly stops him. HIS REFLECTION reveals he is now Malak.

He turns towards Caitlin who is at the pedestrian crossing from the opening scene.

He calmly walks over to her and just as she drops her teddy bear again, grabs her and turns his face towards the speeding car as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THADIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malak and Thadie on the couch.

MALAK
(Tenderly)
I'm going to miss you.

Still asleep, Thadie turns her head.

THADIE
(Whispers)
I love you.

Malak is satisfied.

Song plays: "CALLING ALL ANGELS" by Train.

The song plays to the end of the film.

A car's lights cross the room again, this time reflecting off a mirror.

Malak gets up and walks to the center of the room. He turns towards the couch and we see Thadie sleeping over Tony.

Malak is gone.

Thadie opens her eyes as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

The first day of SUMMER.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Isabella opening her eyes and seeing Liz and Omar enter the room. Meghan, Jim, Samira and William are there already.

Balloons and flowers decorate the room that has a "IT'S A GIRL" sign on the wall.

William is holding their baby girl.

Liz and Omar greet them and the new baby.

William offers Liz the baby to hold.

Smiling, Liz lovingly holds the baby and walks over to Isabella.

She looks into the baby's eyes and almost recognizes it. She smiles then gives the baby to her mother.

The friends are overjoyed for the new parents.

Isabella holds Liz's hand.

FADE TO WHITE.

SUPER:

"Nothing ever dies. We are each other's angels."

FADE OUT.

THE END